

HIGASHI HONGANJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE

505 East Third Street
Los Angeles, CA 90013
(213) 626-4200 - FAX (213) 626-6850

Address Service Requested

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Los Angeles, CA
Permit No. 24616

The Way

Vol. 78 | No. 5
July 2026

HIGASHI HONGANJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE | LOS ANGELES BETSUIN

TEMPLE SCHEDULE

JULY

- 5 10:00 am Shotsuki Service
- 7 7:00 pm Tuesday Discussion
- 12 10:00 am Sunday Service/DG
- 19 10:00 am Obon Family Service
Pet Memorial Service
- 25 LABCC Camp (to 8/1)
- 25 1-9 pm OBON FESTIVAL
- 26 11:00 am Obon/Hatsubon Service
- 26 1-9 pm OBON FESTIVAL

AUGUST

- 2 10:00 am Shotsuki Service
- 2 12:30 pm Preventing Senior
Scams Workshop
- 4 7:00 pm Tuesday Discussion
- 9 No Service
- 16 No Service
- 16 9:00 am Big Bargain Sale
- 18 7:00 pm Tuesday Discussion
- 23 No Service
- 26 Dobo Gathering in
Brazil 8/26-9/5
- 30 No Service

67TH ANNUAL

HHBT OBON 2026

**SATURDAY
& SUNDAY
JULY 25 & 26
1:00 – 9:00 PM
AT HIGASHI HONGANJI
BUDDHIST TEMPLE**

Though we are open for
Sunday Services in person,
we will continue to
STREAM LIVE ON FACEBOOK
[FACEBOOK.COM/HHBT.LA](https://www.facebook.com/HHBT.LA)
SUNDAYS | 10 AM

VISITING THE TEMPLE
The temple is currently open
for private services and visi-
tations by appointment.
Please call us to schedule an
appointment. 213-626-4200



The Way



Volume 78 | Number 5 | July 2026

HIGASHI HONGANJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE • LOS ANGELES BETSUIN

Ah, Ami-da! (Ah, It's Ami!)

Rinban Kenjun Kawawata

Mika, who works in the temple office, has a two-year-old daughter named Ami.

She comes to the office with her mother, and always asks either volunteer Nancy-san or me to play with her.

Ami's favorite activities are playing with a ball or pushing a toy Target shopping cart filled with her favorite toys at the temple. She mostly plays with Nancy san, and what amazes me is the dynamic lives of these two. I cannot compare to their energy, the flexibility, and sustainability that allow them to keep playing forever.

I believe the source of that dynamic life is wish or aspiration.

A vibrant life, a wish. Life is always filled with the wish to live vibrantly. That's why children can play without a care in the world, losing themselves in it. The carefree smiles of children are a testament to this.

This fundamental wish to live vibrantly is a wish that everyone has. However, as we grow, the ego begins to emerge, and we become trapped by it and live within it. But this desire to live a vibrant and free life is always deep inside of us. And it develops into a desire to be liberated from the constraints of the ego.

The Buddha also recognized this desire.



When he first met a young practitioner, he noticed and was inspired by the young man's desire to seek the path, his bodhicitta, and his original wish. Later, the Buddha also be-

(Please see **AMI-DA**, page 5)

Farewell Greetings from Rev. Kensho Goto

It is hard to believe that five years have already passed since I was assigned to the North America District, and the time for my return to Japan is now drawing near. I am deeply grateful to all of you for the guidance, encouragement, and support you have generously provided throughout these years.

As this will be my final contribution, I would like to take this opportunity to share some reflections on what I have experienced and learned through my life in Los Angeles.

I arrived in Los Angeles in October 2021 to begin serving as a minister at the North America District Office. At that time, we were still in the midst of the COVID pandemic, and Sunday services were being held online only. Nearly a full year passed without experiencing many major events, and it was not until my second year that I was finally able to experience the regular activities and events that had previously been suspended.

During that unfamiliar and often difficult period, there was something that became a great source of support for me: the members who gathered at the temple and warmly spoke to me. As temple activities gradually resumed, many members showed kindness and concern toward both the temple and the ministers.

To be honest, because of my naturally reserved personality and my limited English ability, I often struggled to communicate well with the members. Even so, the kindness and warmth that everyone showed me made me feel accepted, as though I was being told that it was okay for me to be here. That meant a great deal to me.

At the beginning of our services, we chant the Three Treasures: Buddha,

Dharma, and Sangha. Buddhism teaches us to cherish all three. Each is important, of course, but I personally feel that in modern society, Sangha — the Buddhist community — is especially important.

In Japanese Buddhist culture, it is not very common for members to gather at the temple every week like we do here for Sunday service. Even at my family's small temple in Japan, people gather only a few times a year, such as for Hoonko, New Year services, and Eitaikyo services in spring and autumn. Normally, ministers visit each family's home monthly to chant sutras in memory of their ancestors.

That tradition is also very meaningful, and I personally enjoyed visiting families, chanting sutras, and having casual conversations afterward. However, after seeing the culture of Sunday services here in America, I began to feel that this style alone does not easily foster strong connections among members themselves.

In recent years, I have also heard that in Japan, more and more families are saying that monthly memorial visits are no longer necessary. As a result, the connection between people and the temple is gradually becoming limited to funerals and memorial services. In other words, the community that sustains and passes on the Buddhist teachings is itself beginning to weaken.

Does this mean that Buddhist teachings are no longer necessary in modern society? In this age of scientific and technological advancement, is it foolish or outdated to rely on Buddha and God, or to wish for birth in the Pure Land or Heaven?

Certainly, we cannot scientifically prove the existence of Buddha, gods, heaven, or the Pure Land. However, the

(Please see **GOTO**, page 5)



Betsuin News



SEPTEMBER SERVICES

6	No Service (Labor Day)
13	10:00 am Autumn Ohigan Service
13	1:00 pm Autumn Seminar
20	10:00 am Shotsuki Service
27	10:00 am Sunday Service Temple Fun Day

AUGUST & SEPTEMBER SERVICE UPDATE

After Obon, we will have Shotsuki Service the first week of August on the 2nd. There will be no service for the remainder of the month of August. Dharma School will take a break in August and resume in September. September's schedule has been updated in the box above.

Tanjo-e/Hatsumairi Service

Our Tanjo-e and Hatsumairi Service was held on Sunday, May 17th. Tanjo-e is a special service that celebrates the birth of Shinan Shōnin, the founder of our Jodo Shinshu Buddhist tradition. Shinran was born around this time near Kyoto, Japan in the year 1173. Rev. Ken Yamada was our guest speaker for this year's Tanjo-e Service.

At our Tanjo-e Service, we also observed Hatsumairi by welcoming Layla Aiko Suzuki-Scremin into our Sangha. Congratulations to Layla and her family.

Toban committee members provided a delicious lunch of assorted vegetarian dishes for all of the members to enjoy. Thank to you everyone who joined us for this special service.



Funeral Pre-Planning Workshop

On Sunday, May 31st, 2026, we held a Funeral Pre-Planning Workshop as part of our Keiro Grant Series. The Keiro Grant Program's focus is to provide resources to help organizations put on programs that support older adults and caregivers.

Russell Martinez, along with Brian Takahashi and Yoshi Okamoto, represented Fukui Mortuary to present a program about the benefits of pre-planning for one's final arrangements. This included topics such as mortuary and cemetery arrangements. They emphasized the benefit and importance of planning in advance to take the emotional and financial burden off loved ones and prevent having to make these arrangements when you are already ill or nearing death. While no one wants to think about themselves or their loved ones passing, as Buddhists and humans, we understand that this is inevitable. Preparing in advance in a low-stress environment and understanding all of the options and decisions beforehand can ease some of the stress of what will be an emotional time in the future. They recommended even middle-aged adults to begin the process now, while they have the mental capacity and funds to make decisions, and reassured us that even if decisions are made, changes can be made in the future if you move or change your mind.

Thank you to the Keiro Grant Program for making this event possible and to Russell, Brian, and Yoshi for providing valuable information to all of our attendees. Our next Keiro Grant workshop will be held on Sunday, August 2nd on the topic of fraud and scam prevention. We hope you will join us.



Father's Day & Graduation

On Sunday, June 14th, we held our Father's Day/Graduation Family Service. The service was held a week earlier than usual due to the scheduling of the YABA Las Vegas trip. Heather Barbod was the guest speaker for Father's Day. She presented a thoughtful message honoring her father and other father-figures in her life. Thank you for speaking, Heather.

Rinban Kawawata gave a short message in honor of our 2026 graduates. Isabelle Gonzalez and Andrew Webb were honored in person for graduating from preschool and elementary school, respectively.

After the service, fathers and father-figures in attendance were gifted potted plants courtesy of Lisa Shimamoto and bags of popcorn and Cracker Jacks. Thank you to Janet Ito for coordinating the gifts.

A festive lunch was held downstairs after the service, including a variety of sandwiches and salads, chips and guacamole, and a variety of desserts. Thank you to Jeanne Kawawata for coordinating the luncheon.

Happy Father's Day and congratulations to the class of 2026!

Our deepest condolences to the family and relatives of ...

Yoshimaro Ashikaga (82)
March 4, 2026

Kenei Uehara (82)
May 28, 2026

Namu Amida Butsu



OBON SEASON IS HERE!

This year, the Higashi Obon Festival will be held at the temple on Saturday and Sunday, July 25 and 26, 2026.

Hatsubon Service will be held on Sunday, July 26th at 11:00 am in honor of those who have passed away since our last Obon. Manto-e lanterns may be purchased in memory of your loved ones prior to the festival. The lanterns will hang overhead and honor their memory as we dance bon odori both evenings.

Enjoy our food booths, game booths, Farmer's Market, live entertainment, and much more!

We look forward to gathering with family and friends and making more memories again in 2026!

Please join us July 25 & 26 from 1 pm to 9 pm, as we welcome everyone back to celebrate Obon with us at Higashi!

Keiro's Quality of Life Classes

PREVENTING SENIOR SCAMS WORKSHOP

Sunday, August 2, 2026

12:30 - 1:30 pm

at HHBT

Free to attend

Please scan the QR code to RSVP



67TH ANNUAL OBON FESTIVAL SATURDAY & SUNDAY | JULY 25 & 26

RAFFLE

Please invite your family and friends to join us in participating in our Annual Obon Raffle drawing. We have many great prizes, including our top four prizes, which you do not need to be present to win. In addition to these great prizes, we have other donations from our members and friends in the community. We are requesting a donation of \$5.00 per raffle ticket or \$50.00 for a book of ten tickets. Be sure to send in your raffle tickets for a chance to win one of these great prizes. Extra raffle tickets are available in the temple office and throughout the weekend at the Obon Festival.

FIRST PRIZE
\$1,000 Cash

SECOND PRIZE
2 Dodgers Tickets for Ohtani
Bobblehead Night + Parking

THIRD PRIZE
\$500 Cash

FOURTH PRIZE
Apple iPad

visit our website at
hhbt-la.org



facebook.com/hhbt.la



@higashihonganjila

PLEASE CONSIDER DONATING
TO HIGASHI HONGANJI
BUDDHIST TEMPLE AT
HHBT-LA.ORG

HELP AT OBON!

we're looking for volunteers to fill various roles at our Obon Festival! If you would like to help out, please contact the office!

213-626-4200

info@hhbt-la.org

MANTO-E LANTERNS

Orders are now being accepted for Manto-e Lanterns for our Annual Obon Festival. If you would like an order form, they are available in the temple office. Please call to reserve your lantern at your earliest convenience. The cost is \$30 per lantern. Please let us know if you would like to pick up your lantern after the Obon Festival so that we can be sure to set yours aside. We will hold all reserved lanterns until September 1st.

OBON GIFT CERTIFICATES

Obon gift certificates can be purchased in increments of \$10. They are great to give to friends and family to use over the weekend. Gift certificates can be used toward the purchase of food at our Obon only and are available through the temple office. Please be sure to preorder your gift certificates if possible! If you would like your gift certificates mailed to you, please be sure that we receive your payment by Friday, July 17th. You are also welcome to pick up at the office.

FOR UPDATES, PLEASE
SUBSCRIBE TO OUR EMAIL LIST
BY VISITING OUR WEBSITE AT
HHBT-LA.ORG

LCDC NEWS

June is an exciting and sad month for us at Lumbini. We are very proud of our new graduates who have learned and accomplished so much during their time with us, but we are sad that they'll be moving on to new schools. We'll miss all our friends!

At the beginning of June, Lumbini held an Open House and welcomed prospective families, current students and their families, alumni, and friends to come see the school and meet the teachers. There were crafts and activities for the kids to enjoy and a chance for everyone to see what Lumbini has been up to through photo displays and artwork. Thank you to everyone who came by to visit, and also to all of our volunteers who helped!

Be sure to come see us at Obon! We'll be performing songs that we've learned in school and during Japanese class with Rev. Mayuki. We hope you'll come watch and support us at Obon! We will be hosting the Bake Sale! See you at Obon!

If you are interested in enrolling a child between the ages of 2 to 5 years of age in Lumbini's program, please contact the Lumbini office at 213-680-2976. Potty training assistance is now available.



Congratulations Class of 2026!

MASTERS DEGREE

GALILEA MARQUEZ
University of Southern California
Masters in Spatial Data Science

COLLEGE

RYLIE MAYUMI HARADA
University of Southern California
Bachelor of Science in Accounting

TOM KOMATSU
Illinois Wesleyan University
Bachelor of Arts in Computer Science

EMIKO WONG
California Polytechnic State
University, San Louis Obispo
College of Music
Bachelor of Arts in Cello Performance
Attending: University of North Texas
for Masters in College of Music

HIGH SCHOOL

COLIN YUTARO TAMURA
El Camino Real Charter High School
Attending: Los Angeles Pierce College
and will transfer to UC Davis

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

ERI KANAMARU
5th Grade
Arnold Elementary School
Attending: Calle Mayor Middle School

ANDREW WEBB
6th Grade
Saint Mark's School
Attending: Highpoint Academy

PRESCHOOL
ISABELLE GONZALEZ



**FOR CHILDREN AGES
2 TO 5 YEARS**
OPEN YEAR ROUND:
MONDAY through FRIDAY
7:30am to 6:00pm
closed national holidays



LUMBINI IS NOW OFFERING

- * LUNCH PROGRAM
- * INTRO TO JAPANESE
with Rev. Mayuki
- * EXPRESSION THROUGH
MOBILITY with Mr. John

LUMBINICDC.ORG

Call Ms. Leslie 213-680-2976!
lumbini.missleslie@gmail.com

 @lumbini_preschool
 facebook.com/lumbinidc

**NOW ENROLLING
2 YEAR OLDS!**
POTTY TRAINING
ASSISTANCE
AVAILABLE!

SUBMISSION DEADLINE!

Submissions for *The Way* are due the 10th of each month for the following month's issue. Articles and announcements for our August/September Issue are due July 10th. Submissions may be subject to printing restrictions and staff approval. Thank you and we look forward to hearing from you!

BIG BARGAIN SALE UPDATE

DONATION DROP-OFF:

Tuesday, July 28 through Monday, August 11.

Weekdays: 10:30 am - 4:00 pm

Weekends: 10:00 am - 3:00 pm

(Donations delivered after August 11 will **NOT** be accepted)

VOLUNTEER DATES:

Sorting: August 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, starting at 9:00 am to 3:00 pm

Set-up: Saturday, August 15 - starting at 9:00 am

Sale: Sunday, August 16 - 8:30 am-2:00 pm (Lunch will be provided for volunteers) Customers can enter at 9:00 am

Please indicate which day(s) and time(s) you would like to volunteer. Send your name, phone number, and email address.

If you have any questions, please email: Ted Oyama (toyama@aepcgroup.com), Karyn Oyama (karynoyama@gmail.com), or Penny Murata (prmurata@hotmail.com)

***Please see donation guidelines in the June issue of *The Way* before donating.

Thank you so much for your help!
Team Oyama and Murata

(AMI-DA, cont. from page 1)

came a monk and sought the path.

Unless we meet someone, who has recognized this fundamental desire and is walking it, we will not realize that we have the same desire.

By meeting a teacher, we become aware that we have this original wish within us.

And this is where the journey of listening to the Buddhist teachings begins.

The power of the original wish, innermost aspiration propels us toward listening to the Buddhist teachings and



liberates us from our own ego. This is called "Amida"

I can see this power of original wish in Ami's vibrant life. "Ah, Amida"



(GOTO, cont. from page 1)

teachings of Jodo Shinshu are not based solely on such things.

Shinran Shonin, the founder of Jodo Shinshu, honestly recognized himself as an ordinary and imperfect human being, and continually reflected deeply upon his own life and actions. I believe that this way of living remains deeply meaningful even today. Furthermore, I believe these teachings form the foundation for creating a society in which people support one another and where all people are respected equally.

Human beings cannot live entirely alone. We all survive by supporting and being supported by others in various ways. That community of mutual support is what we call Sangha, and it is also the place where the teachings

are preserved and passed on to future generations.

It was through the culture of Sunday service here in America that I was reminded once again of the importance of Sangha. Taking this opportunity, I would like to express my sincere gratitude for being able to learn from American Buddhism and for having had such a precious experience here.

As a matter of fact, my visa is set to expire at the end of July this year, after which I will be returning to Japan. A new minister will be assigned from Japan to succeed me in serving the North America District. I would be most grateful if you could extend to my successor the same warmth, kindness, and support that you have so generously shown to me.

As for myself, I hope to share with many people in Japan what I have learned here in America—the value of Buddhist community and the importance of the connections that bind people together.

Once again, I would like to express my sincere gratitude for all the kindness and support you have extended to me throughout these years. I pray for your continued health, happiness, and success, and I look forward to the day when our paths may cross again.

Thank you very much for everything.

